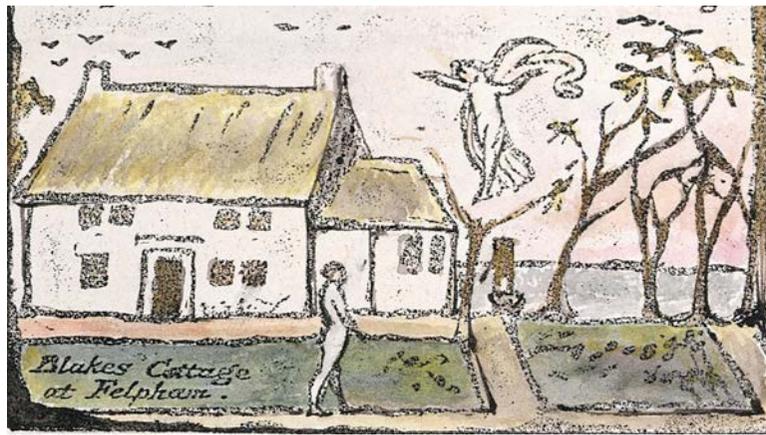


WILLIAM BLAKE'S COTTAGE

THE BLAKE COTTAGE TRUST



1800 - 1803

Blake's cottage at Felpham.

William Blake, (detail) Plate 36, *Milton a Poem*, 1804.

WILLIAM BLAKES COTTAGE

1	INTRODUCTION	05
1.1	William Blake's Cottage	
1.2	The Vision	
2	PRESERVATION OF BLAKE'S COTTAGE	06
2.1	Statutory Designations	
2.2	Historical Precedent	
3	BLAKE'S COTTAGE TODAY	12
3.0	Existing Cottage	
4	PROPOSALS	16
4.1	Cottage Conservation	
4.2	Proposed Work	



1.1 WILLIAM BLAKES COTTAGE

William Blake's cottage in Felpham was successfully purchased and placed into trust on 21 September 2015.

William Blake (poet, artist and visionary 1757-1827) and his wife Catherine lived in the Cottage in the village of Felpham in West Sussex between 1800 and 1803. The Cottage is one of only two houses to survive of the nine residences that Blake occupied during his lifetime; the second to survive is a two-room apartment at No. 17 South Molton Street in the West End of London, now a commercial property owned by the Duke of Westminster.

It was here that he wrote the words to the hymn *Jerusalem*. Here that he was accused and later tried for treason. And here also, whilst living in Felpham, occurred what is arguably the most significant and transformative period in Blake's creative life.

The Blake Cottage Trust is now planning the next stage – the renovation and restoration of the Cottage.

1.2 THE VISION

Our intent is to bring the Cottage back as much as possible to a state that William and Catherine Blake would have recognised when they lived and worked there between 1800 and 1803. This will require the later extensions to the Cottage to be removed. We intend to use the consequent reduction in massing to create a new multifunctional building that will be an architectural jewel in its own right that will complement the Cottage, and so together the Cottage becomes a significant part of Felpham village life.

We believe that our project, once complete, will attract three types of visitor.

Firstly, people who just want to visit the Cottage on open days, to see how the Blakes lived and to see in action, an exact replica of Blake's Eighteenth Century Wooden Rolling Press – an Engraver's Copper-plate Press.

Secondly, as we do not want the Cottage to be a lifeless museum, part of the renovation will ensure that part of it can be used for short term accommodation. We expect that artists, researchers or simply Blakean enthusiasts will want to stay over a short weekend or a longer week.

Thirdly, the multi-functional building which will cater for small exhibitions, educational visits and include a small library will encourage writers, musicians, painters, printmakers and schools to make use of it.

The two buildings together will never cater for large numbers of people – the Cottage itself is just too small. But our aspiration is not to be measured by the numbers who come in through the front door, though these are important, but rather by the measure of what comes out of that door – a stream of creativity, prophecy and imagination.

The proposed new building together with the space presently occupied by the garage will also provide sufficient room for all the office, administrative, storage & utility needs. There will also be sufficient space for a small second residence for an eventual resident caretaker.

William Blake was a man of vision and the renovation of the Cottage might in time become an axis of imagination between the Cottage in Felpham and Blake's only other surviving residence in the heart of London.

2.0

PRESERVATION OF BLAKES COTTAGE

The cottage is an example of a modest 18th or possibly late 17th century dwelling built of materials which are characteristic of the local vernacular, it was approaching 100 years old when the Blake's occupied it. We know from Blake's own sketch of the cottage that it was a modest rural Sussex flint cottage of 2-up, 2-down with a small lean-to or outhouse. It was very possibly lime (white) washed and addressed a south-facing kitchen garden and adjoining fields. At the time it was the southern most dwelling of the village of Felpham and would have enjoyed views to the dunes, beach and sea beyond.

The proposal outlines a conservation-led approach, established from historical precedent. The careful and judicious proposals follow established principles, and aim to meet set criteria for urgent repair and conservation; improving access & interpretation and supporting a business plan that will ensure the continuing use and protection of the cottage into the future.

2.1 STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS

Blake's Cottage, located at No. 1 Blake's Road, Felpham, was listed Grade II* on 22nd July 1949 (National Heritage List for England, list entry number 1353792; Appendix 1). The description in the list entry describes it as an altered dwelling of 17th century date.

A roadside garden wall with archway, connects to Blake's Cottage on the west side. This wall was listed Grade II on 23rd July 1998 (National Heritage List for England, list entry number 1375729; Appendix 2). The description in the list entry ascribes the wall an 18th or 19th century date.

To chart the development of the cottage with its additions and to help assess the significance of the cottage and its features we commissioned Archaeology South-East, a division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology at the University College London who are experts in rural dwellings of Kent & Sussex.

2.2 HISTORICAL PRECEDENT

Working with findings from the Archaeology report, a proposal for William Blake's cottage is formed that focuses on the protection and appreciation of the original building.

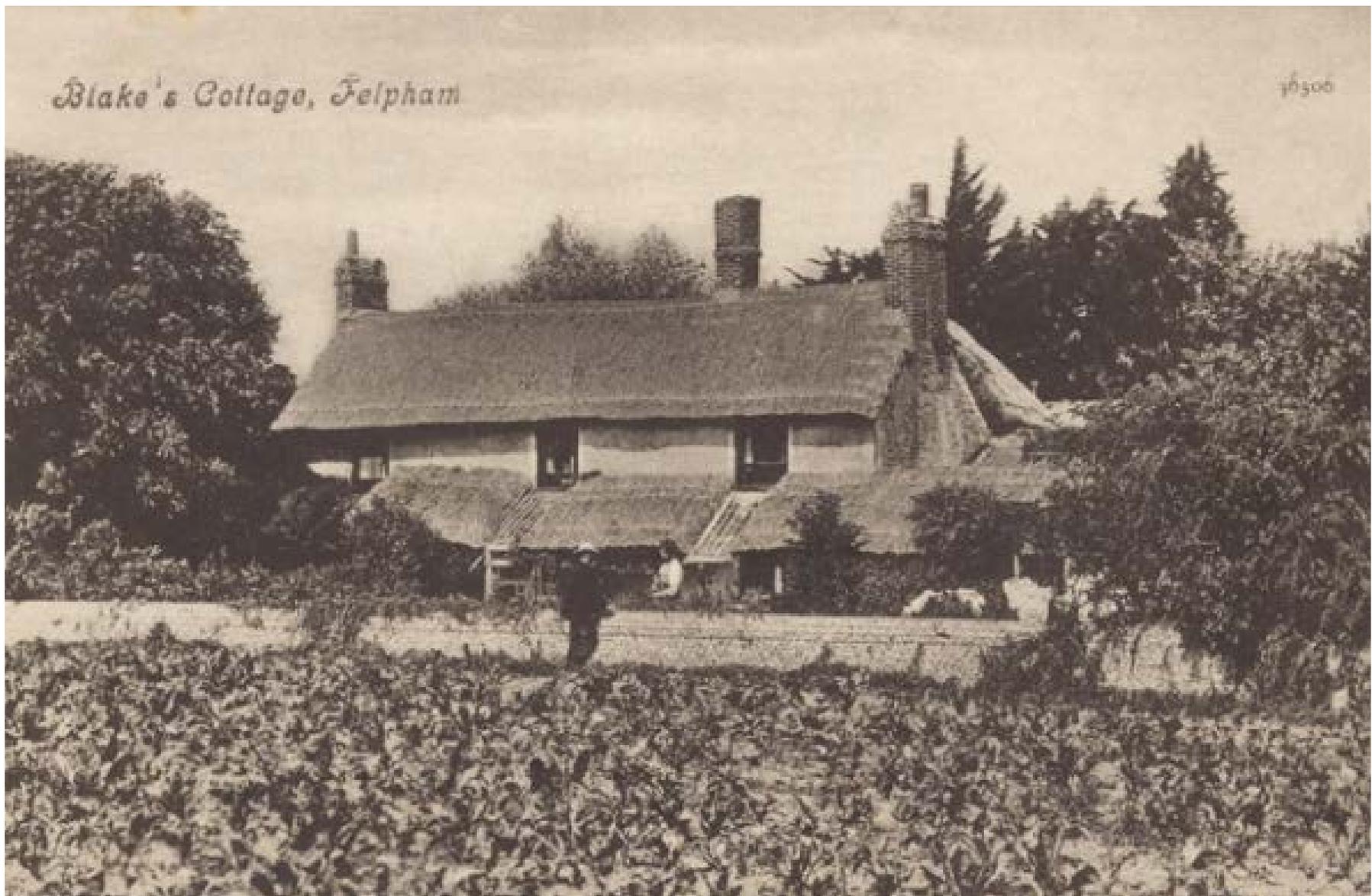
The building is considered to be of greatest significance in terms of its historical and communal value through its association with the poet, artist and visionary, William Blake (1757 – 1827).

The 19th century modifications are considered to be of moderate significance in that they reflect the historical upgrading of the house, while the 20th century alterations are of negligible significance. It is fortunate that the later alterations to the existing 18th/19th century cottage have been relatively minor, and as such much of the building's original form and layout can still be returned to historical precedent.



1880

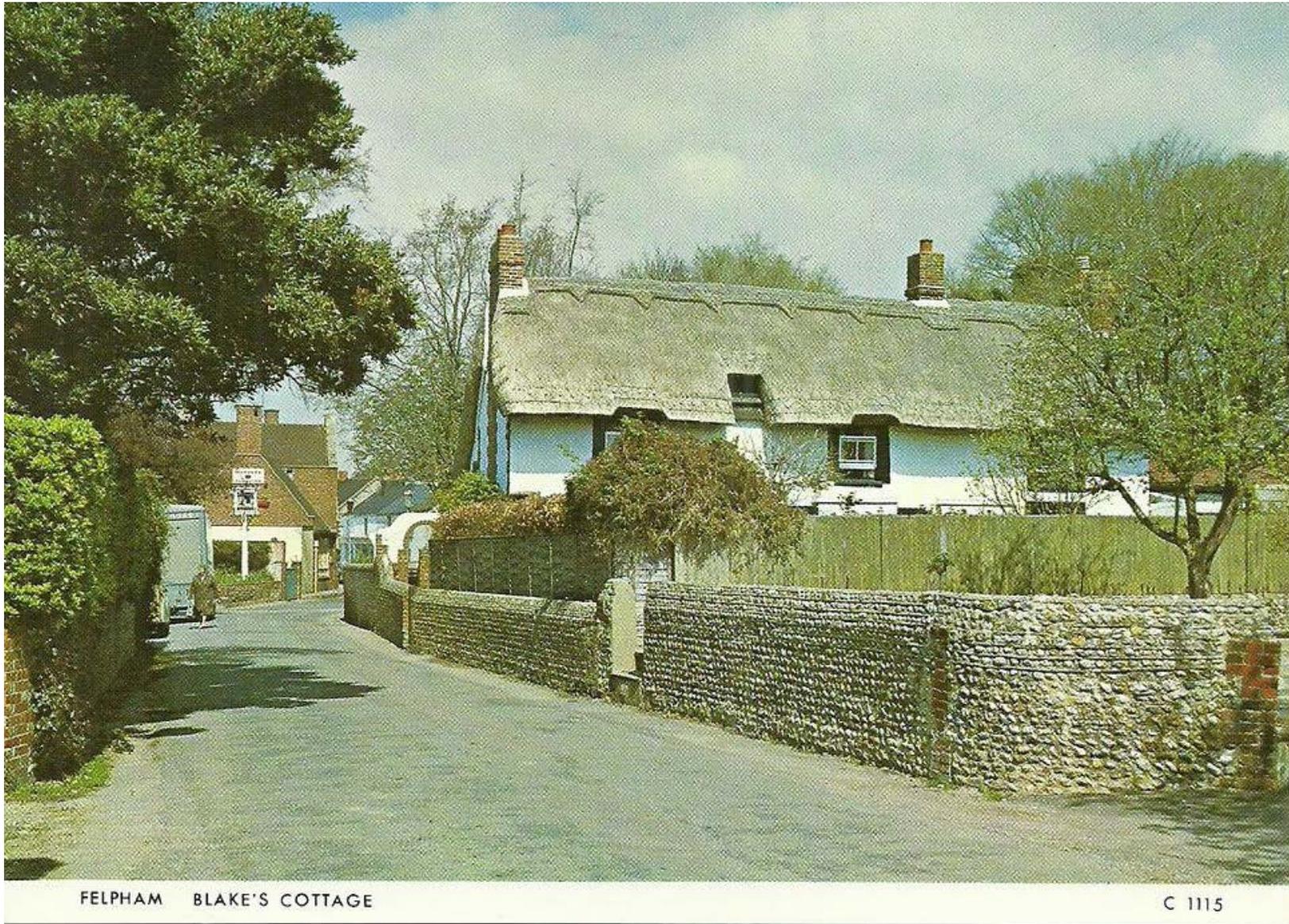
Etching by Herbert H. Gilchrist, 'Blake's Cottage at Felpham', Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake*, Second Edition, 1880, Vol. 1, p. 150.



Photographic postcard dated 1900.



Photographic postcard dated 1938.



Photographic postcard dated 1945 - 50.



Photograph 1978.

3.0

BLAKE'S COTTAGE TODAY

The cottage has been in use as a private family home until 2015, when the Blake Cottage Trust were able to purchase it for public use.

The cottage had been largely unused with most day to day living taking place in the single-storey extension.

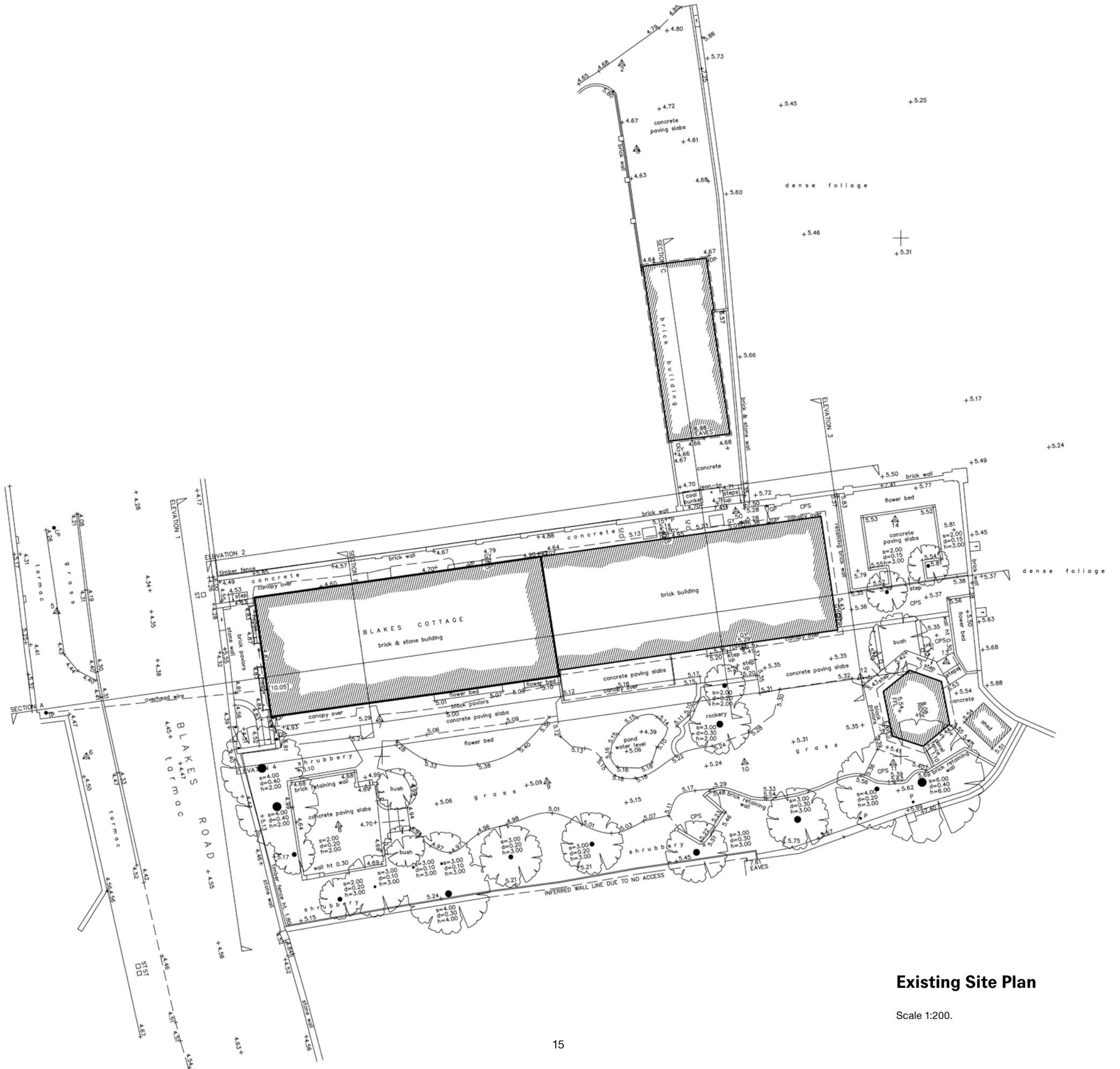
The condition of the cottage is such that it is in pressing need of preservation and conservation work and general repair.

The roof has been over thatched (perhaps more than once) which has overloaded the existing roof trusses and stays, causing failure. The roof is now propped to arrest more movement. The cottage displays a number of features of different eras with few of significant age. The cottage also remains largely inaccessible at both levels due to stepped level changes.









Existing Site Plan

Scale 1:200.

4.0

THE PROPOSALS

The proposals we have sketched out respond to the Trust's brief for the future of the cottage, and create an open and accessible destination for the public that will inspire visitors with exhibitions, events and a programme that raises awareness of this important site and building. Equally the Trust are pragmatic and have prepared an initial business plan that will support this continued work, and bring a sustainable model through the provision of new facilities.

4.1 COTTAGE CONSERVATION

The cottage is at the centre of the proposal, and is to be sensitively refurbished. The principles of this follow the findings of the archaeological report in terms of historical precedent and significance.

Whilst the intent is not to return the cottage to one that Blake would have specifically known, we feel (and have demonstrated) there is a scheme that is familiar to this intent that reverses later inappropriate changes, retaining listed structures and enhances the special character, allowing the appreciation of the site and cottage.

4.2 PROPOSED WORKS

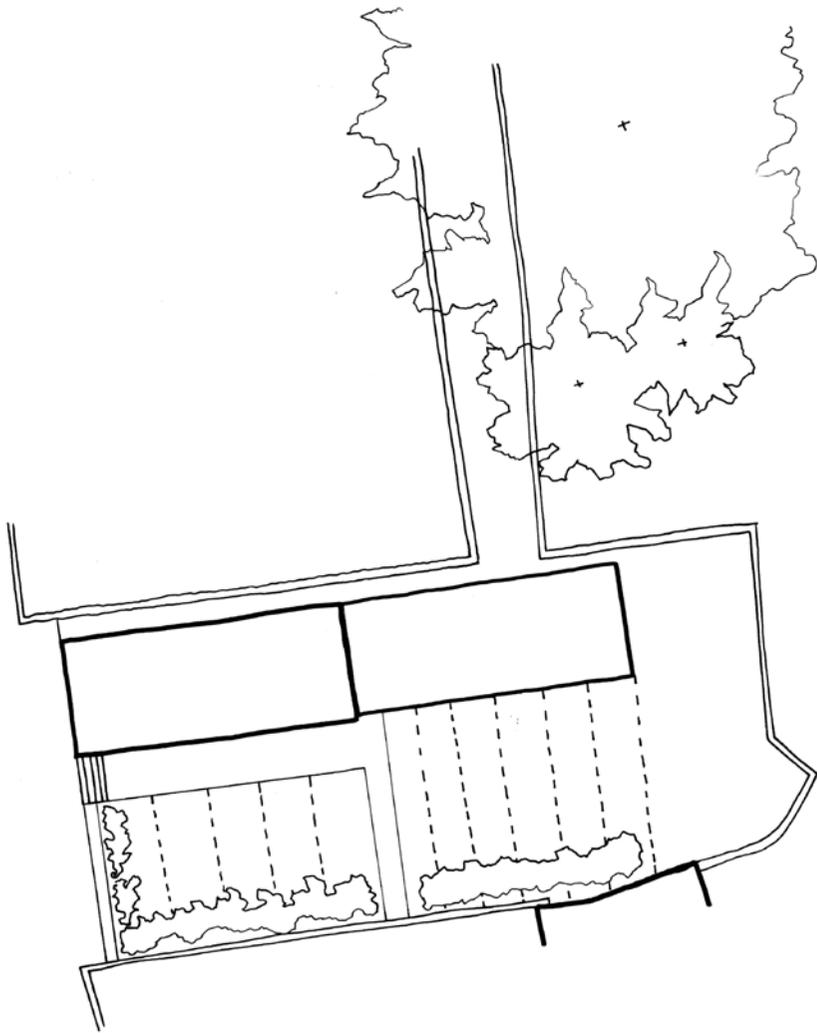
Suggested proposals include the removal of the single storey 1960's additions and alterations, removal of later windows, and the reinstatement of historically sympathetic windows. We have considered reapplying lime wash to the flint and making repairs where required. Internally we are suggesting returning the existing stair configuration and establishing the simple parlour and print studio.

Externally we suggest an improvement to the setting of the cottage with new landscaping; better visibility from the road and removal of the later additions, opening up space around the cottage, and as such giving more prominence to the cottage on the site.

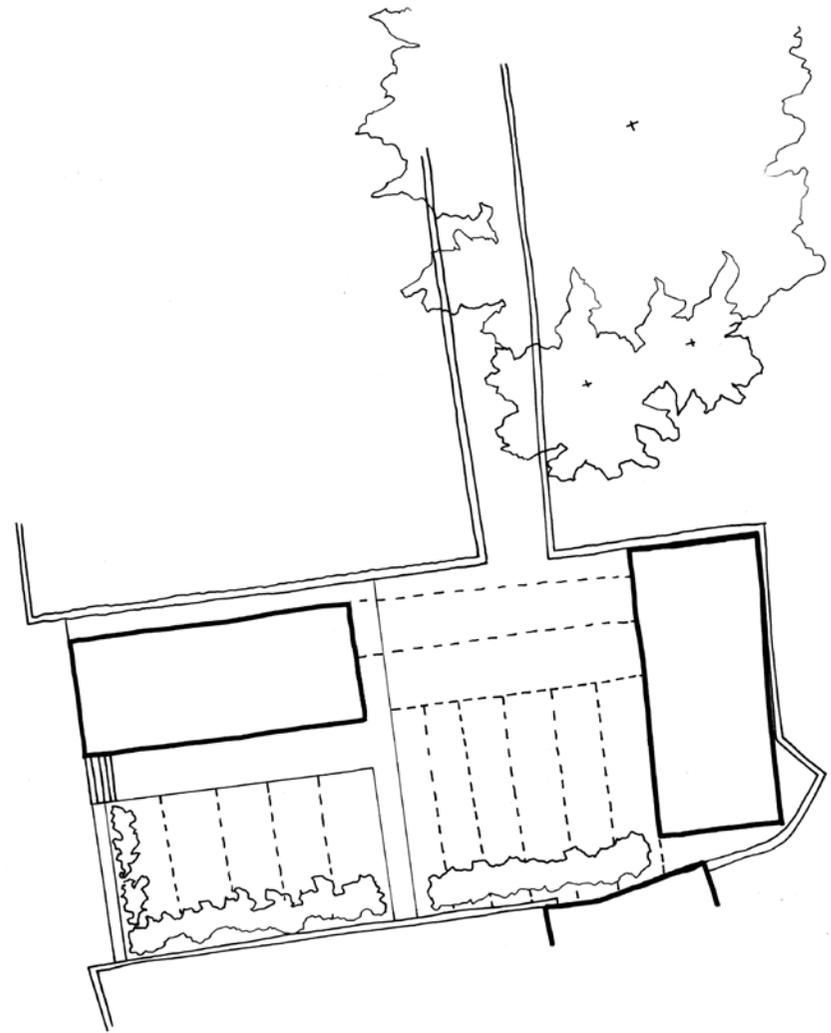
The brief requires the provision of new facilities given the spatial constraints and sensitivities of the cottage. Referencing *Elisha in the Chamber on the Wall*, arguably Blake's only architectural vision we have conceived a striking new space within a new garden pavilion sensitively located at the end of the large garden, to give consideration on the site to the existing cottage.

The new single storey building appears as a garden wall with a simple opening to frame views of the cottage from within. The building contains a single flexible gallery and convening classroom space designed for many uses and is roofed with a floating folded roof. The building contains supporting facilities, WCs and a small library and study room. A new smaller support building sits on the site of the existing garage and retains a similar size and massing to the existing outbuilding.

The proposals include a discreet access ramp to the raised site making the cottage accessible for the first time.



Existing Massing



Proposed Massing

Existing



01

Remove section of wall in front of cottage.

02

Removal of fencing and gates to reduce the barriers to the cottage.

03

Replacement conservation of thatched roof, omitting rooflight.

04

Demolition of 1960's single storey extension.

Proposed



01

Creation of a safe arrival space in front of the cottage. In addition this gives the gable end of the cottage prominence on Blake's Road as a building and site of significance.

02

Doorway retained as a window into the historic print making studio and the working historical recreation of Blake's original press.

03

Existing configuration of windows altered to reinstate historical fenestration arrangement.

04

New conservation roof and thatch.

05

Low level wall retained with new planting behind, to open the cottage to the street.

06

Proposed new pavillion building to sit at the rear of the site, hidden behind a garden wall. Opens up space around the cottage.

COTTAGE RESTORATION AND REORGANISATION

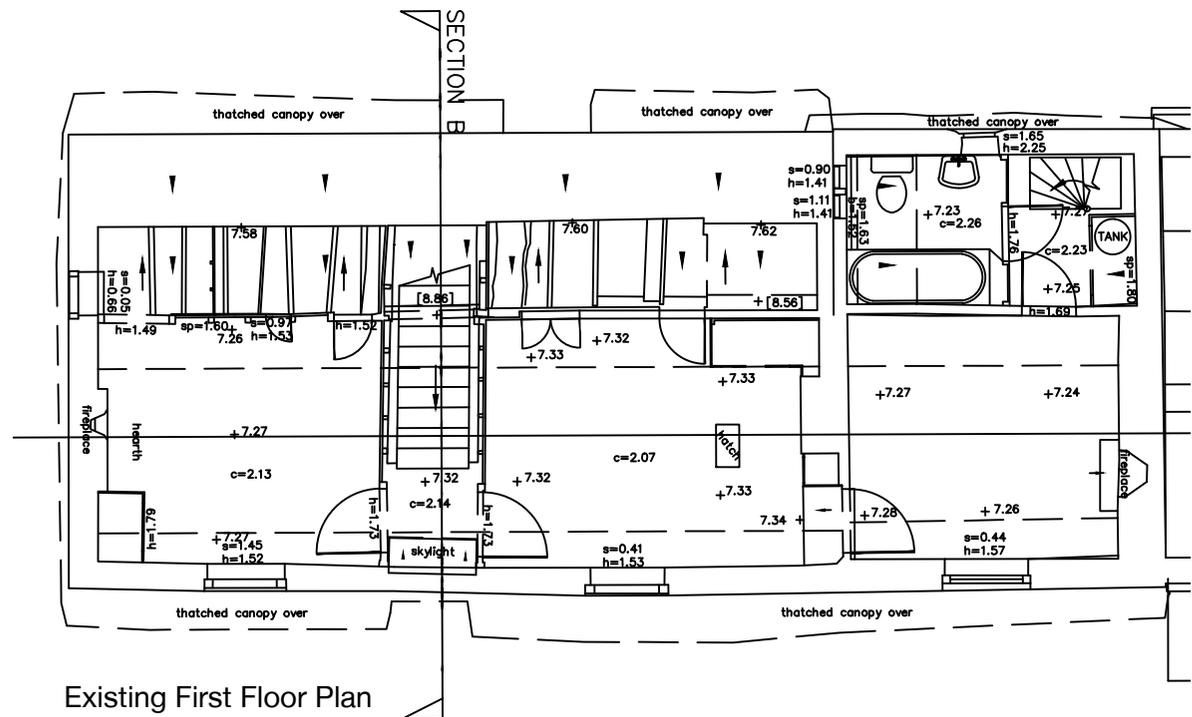
As well as returning the staircase to the original layout, we are proposing to retain the 19th Century extension to facilitate the cottage's use as a short term let.

On the ground floor of the original cottage the studio will house a replica of William Blake's printing press and the parlour will be restored to a layout close to what they experienced when they lived and worked there. The extension will house a secondary entrance for the letting along with the first of the three bedrooms.

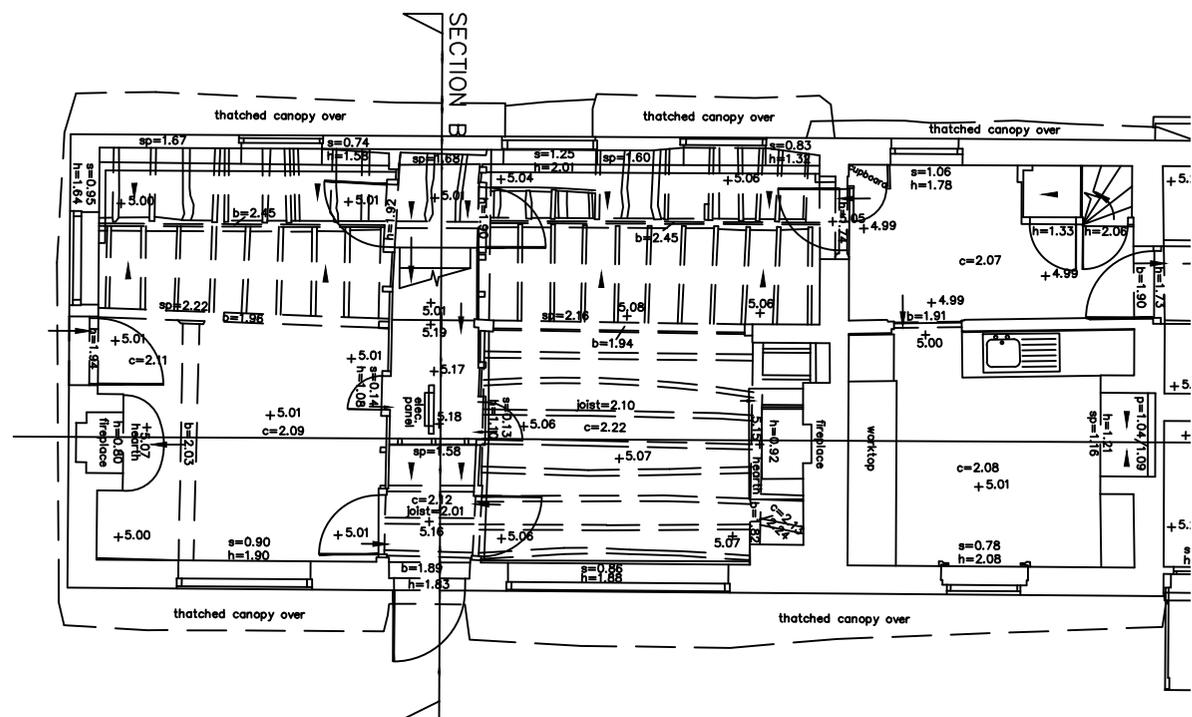
Upstairs the room above the studio will be a bedroom much like the one the Blakes lived and slept in and next to this will be a living/kitchen space. Historically this was an active space where Catherine would paint and was only used as a bedroom when her sister stayed at the cottage.

The eaves space to the north are opened up to below, allowing light to enter the ground floor rooms from high level windows and affording views down from the rooms upstairs.

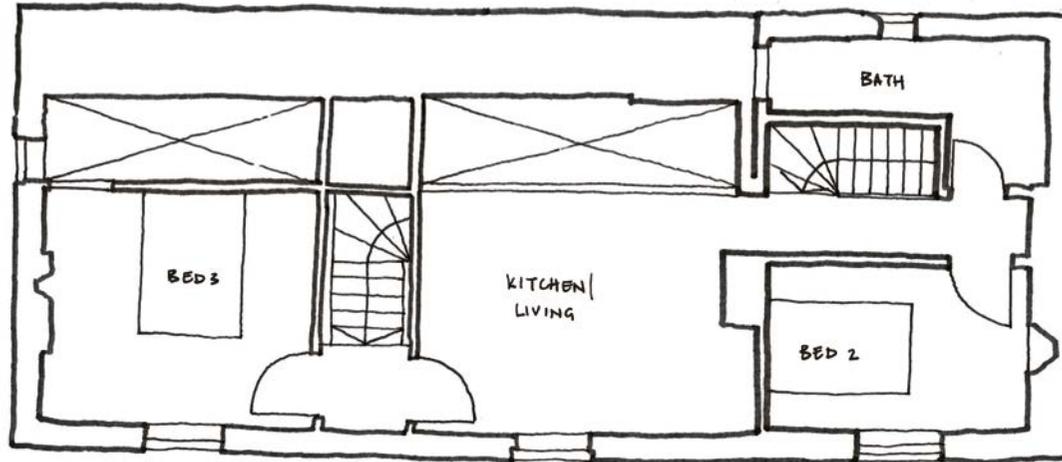
The first floor of the extension will house a third bedroom and large bathroom. The extension has the luxury of becoming self contained as two bedrooms, should both floors of the original cottage be required for events.



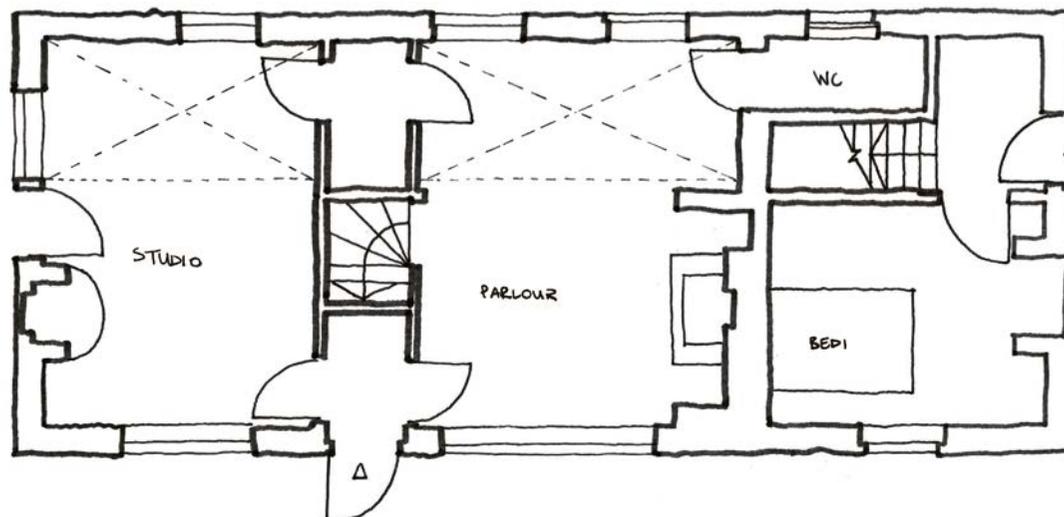
Existing First Floor Plan



Existing Ground Floor Plan



Proposed First Floor Plan



Proposed Ground Floor Plan

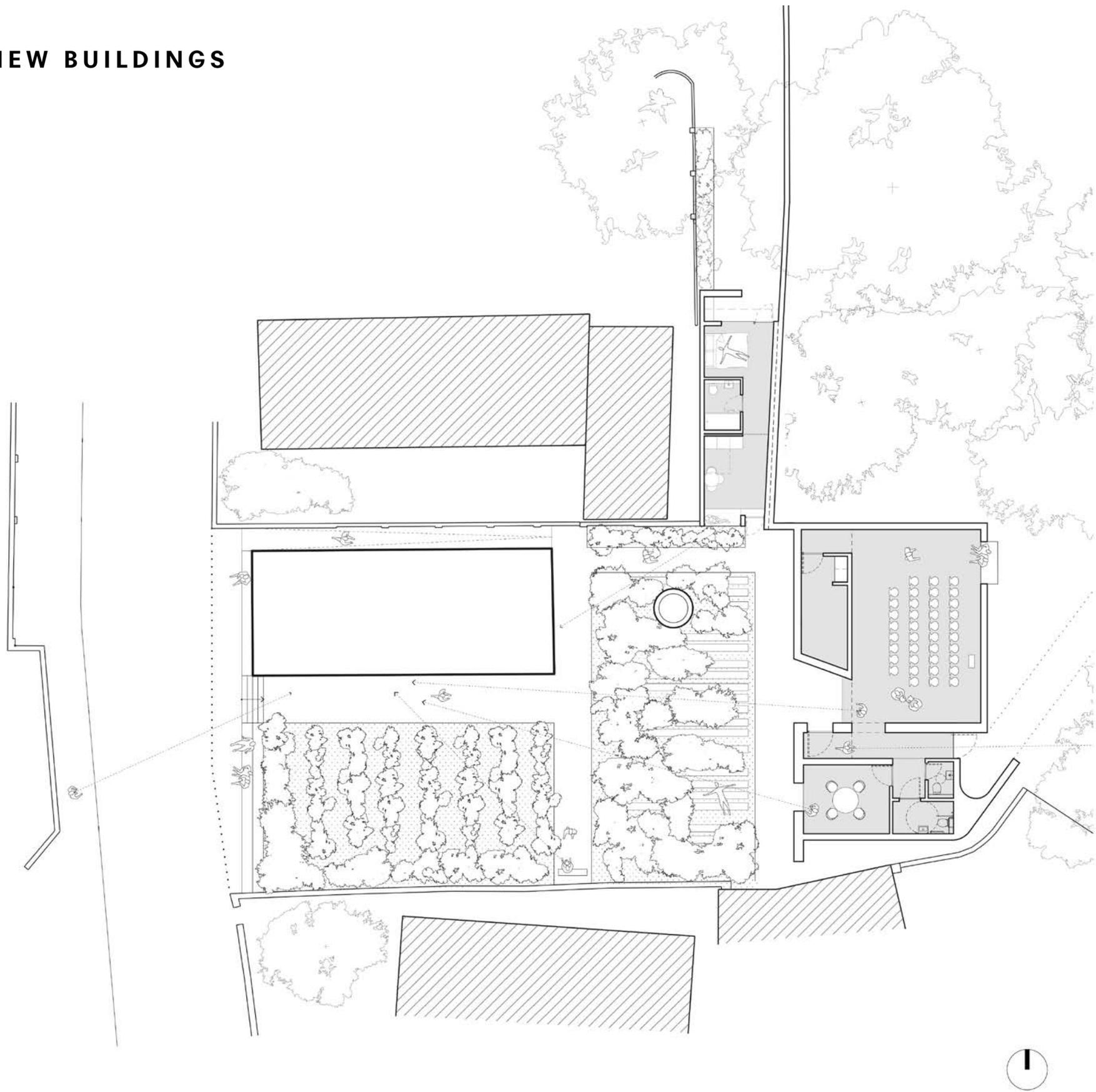


Blake's Road Perspective



Proposed Studio within the Cottage

NEW BUILDINGS



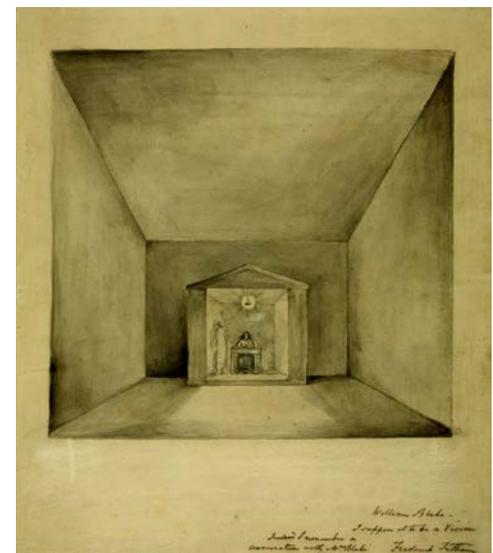
Proposed Site Plan

Scale 1:200.



Proposed Pavillion Setup for Education Workshop

William Blake's 'vision' in *Elisha in the Chamber on the Wall*, represents the Poet, in the innermost shrine of his imagination, dictating the words of an angel. To us this shows a space within a space, a chamber in the wall, or a shrine in the mind. Imagination meets the unexpected. It develops a concept about the size of a space, the quality of the light, and the creation of the unexpected inspiring the imagination.



A Vision: The Inspiration of the Poet
(Elisha in the Chamber on the Wall)
 William Blake, 1819-20.



Proposed Pavillion Setup for Exhibition



Perspective from the Rectory Gardens







Physical model view from Blake's Road



Plan of physical model





Physical model on display in the *William Blake in Sussex: Visions of Albion* exhibition at Petworth House.